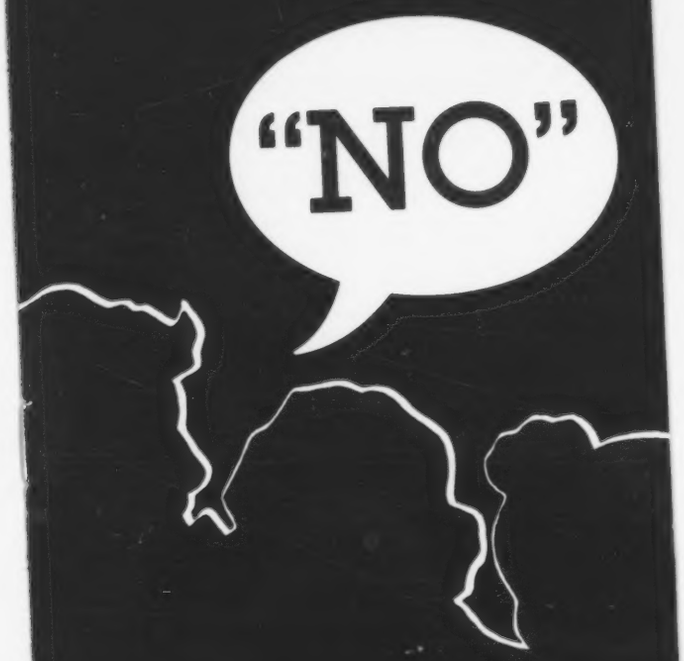
Many Teens Are Saying



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Health Services Administration
Bureau of Community Health Services

DON'T BE FOOLED

into thinking
most teenagers are
having sex.

THEY AREN'T!!

There's a lot to know
before you say "yes"
to having sex.

WHAT'S TO KNOW ABOUT MY BODY?

During the teen years you may be strongly attracted to another person. Your body may send you messages that draw the two of you closer together. But, your body won't tell you how having sex now may harm you. Surprised?? Then you probably don't know that:

One in ten teens becomes pregnant each year.

Young girls have more problems during pregnancy.

The babies of young girls are more likely to be born with serious problems.

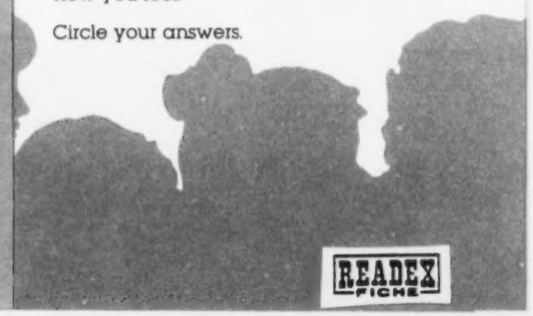
Infections you catch from a sex partner can seriously damage the sex organs of both girls and boys.

Face it! Sex for young people is pretty risky!!

WHAT'S TO KNOW ABOUT MY FEELINGS?

Sexual feelings can be pretty strong! So think before you act. Think about your goals. Think about your future. But most important, think about yourself. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to have sex now? What's the right decision for me?" Here's a checklist that may help you decide how you feel.

Circle your answers.



READEX FICHE

Will I feel good about myself if I have sex now? YES NO

If the relationship breaks up, will I be glad I had sex with this person? YES NO

Would my parents approve of my having sex now? YES NO

Am I responsible enough to decide what to do about an unplanned pregnancy if it happens? YES NO

Am I sure no one is pushing me into having sex? YES NO

Do I believe that having sex proves that I'm a man or a woman? YES NO

Will I have fewer problems if I do have sex? YES NO

Does my partner want to have sex now? YES NO

Am I responsible enough to use a method of birth control every time I do have sex? YES NO

Is having sex now in agreement with my own moral values? YES NO

If any of your answers are NO, then maybe you'd better **WAIT.**

WHAT'S TO KNOW ABOUT BOY/GIRL RELATIONSHIPS?

They're great...as long as you respect the other person's right to make his/her own decisions. Good relationships don't develop overnight. They take time. And sex is not what makes a relationship work.

Watch out for lines like, "If you care about me, you'll have sex with me." You don't have to have sex with someone to prove you like them. And most important, sex should never be used to pay someone back for something—an expensive date, a gift, or kind words. All you have to say is, "Thank you." Sharing feelings is what really makes a relationship strong.

WHAT'S TO KNOW IF YOU DECIDE NOT TO HAVE SEX?

Congratulations...so have lots of other teens your age. It's easy to say "NO" to sex without hurting the other person's feelings or breaking off the relationship. For example, you might say:

- "I like you a lot, but I'm just not ready to have sex."
- "I enjoy being with you, but I don't think I'm old enough to have sex."
- "I don't feel like I have to give you a reason for not having sex. It's just my decision."
- "I don't believe in having sex before marriage. I want to wait."

Also, there are different ways to show affection for another person without having sexual intercourse. YOU AND YOUR PARTNER CAN STOP ON ANY LEVEL.

Some couples have trouble agreeing on a "stopping" point. So...what should you do? Try to avoid situations where you will have to "stop." Talk about your feelings and what seems right for you. If you can't agree, then maybe you need to find someone else whose beliefs are closer to your own.

WHAT'S TO KNOW ABOUT PRESSURE?

It comes from everywhere...advertising, friends, movies, television shows, songs, and books.

BE POPULAR

BE PART OF THE CROWD

BE A MAN

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT

SEX IS FUN

But, stop and think. Will having sex really make you more popular, more mature, more desirable? Probably not. The one sure thing about having sex is that you may be in for problems you don't want to have to handle.

WHAT'S TO KNOW ABOUT MAKING UP YOUR MIND?

"Should I have sex now or should I wait?" It's all up to you. It's true—some teens decide to go ahead and have sex. But the results of your decision—good or bad—will fall on you.

Can you take full responsibility for your actions? Are you willing to risk V.D., pregnancy, abortion, adoption, and parenthood? Can you handle the changed feelings you may have about your own beliefs and values? What if your decisions also hurt others—your parents, your friends, the other person in the relationship? Can you handle that too?

Decisions about sex may be some of the most important decisions you'll ever make. So...think about it.

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If you want further information or help, talk to someone who cares about you. Ask your parents, an older brother or sister, or other adult you feel comfortable talking to. There are people and agencies in your community who want to help—your church, school nurse or counselor. You can also get information and help from your doctor, health department or family planning agency.

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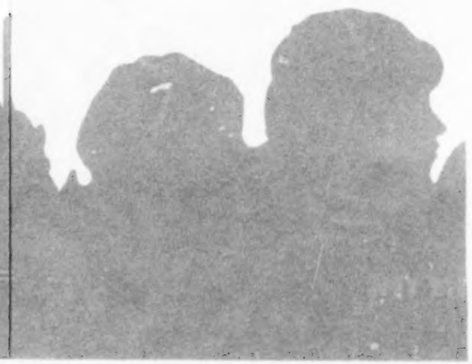

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